

## ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

LIFE HISTORIES OF NORTH AMERICAN WOODPECKERS. By A. C. Bent, illus. by William Zimmerman. Indiana Univ. Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana, 1992: xiv + 262 pp., 25 color plates. \$29.95.—Arthur Cleveland Bent (1866–1954) needs no introduction to those of us in the lower regions of the life table, but younger ornithologists may not be aware of his name or of the major contribution made by him in his 26-volume series “Life Histories of North American Birds” (1919–1968). Bent began this series at the request of the Smithsonian Institution. It was thought that he would continue the work began by Charles Bendire, but Bent started the survey anew, and his volumes include all of the birds known to have occurred (at least with any regularity) in North America in his time.

The present volume is a re-issue of Bent’s volume on woodpeckers (U.S. National Museum Bulletin 174) first printed in 1939. The text remains unchanged, but modern common and scientific names have been added as have been small distribution maps. However, the real attraction in this book are the color plates by Zimmerman. These illustrations are attractive, lifelike, and accurate. I was impressed by the detail of the vegetation in each plate. The color frontispiece in this issue of *The Wilson Bulletin* represents one beautiful example, but all of Zimmerman’s plates are of this quality.

Zimmerman says in the foreword “It is my hope . . . that new colored plates will make it possible for a whole new audience to discover this material and develop an appreciation for the writings of Arthur Cleveland Bent.” I can only add my support to that thought and to encourage Zimmerman and Indiana University Press to re-issue more volumes of Bent’s work in a similar format.—C. R. BLEM.

SPERM COMPETITION IN BIRDS: EVOLUTIONARY CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES. By T. R. Birkhead and A. P. Moller, illus. by D. Quinn. Academic Press, San Diego, California, 1992: 282 pp. \$39.95 (paperbound).—Female birds multiply mate and, as a result, sperm competition occurs. Multiple mating and sperm competition have a cascade of effects on the morphology and behavior of females and males, and these consequences are the stuff of the book, “Sperm Competition.” This book is a benchmark that signals for me that the old order has passed away at last and that avian behavioral ecology has entered a new age. Much of this advance has been stimulated by the ideas of the 1960s and the data of the 1980s that showed that genetic paternity (and maternity, for that matter) could not be assumed on the basis of social associations. The twenty years since Trivers (1972) have produced remarkable changes in what we know about social behavior, and “Sperm Competition” reviews some of those data. It is a very exciting book for me because it demonstrates how significantly our field has changed and where our field is going. And furthermore, despite the title of this book, it only casually takes up the next exciting question, namely, why do females multiply mate, i.e., the evolutionary causes of sperm competition? So, for me “Sperm Competition” heralds the generally optimistic feelings I have about all we have to do in avian behavioral ecology for the 1990s.

Despite my general enthusiasm for “Sperm Competition,” its publication, which seems just in time, also seems premature to me. By this I mean that some of the chapters contain original syntheses of remarkably recent, and sometimes scanty (and therefore prematurely interpreted) data and others reflect “same ole, same ole” interpretations of often repeated data. And yet, the book is full of ideas that still will benefit from additional tests and therefore is just in time to stimulate these tests. I enjoyed reading “Sperm Competition” immensely;